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A BI-WEEKLY REVIEW SERVICE

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Johnston, Stanley. Queen of the Flat-tops. The U.S.S. Lexington and the Coral Sea Battle. Dutton, October 8, 1942. 280p. $3.00

Here is another great epic of the war, the account of the part played by the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Lexington in and near the Coral Sea. Just as They Were Expendable is a marvelous tribute to the men who manned the motor torpedo boats, so is Queen of the Flat-tops outspoken in its praise of the navy personnel characterized by the officers, airmen and sailors of the great aircraft carrier. Carefully and capably does the Chicago Tribune reporter weave in background so that ultimately we have a biography of the Lexington from the date of its birth, commissioned Oct. 3, 1927, to its death on May 8, 1942, (mistakenly given as June 8th on the front end paper). We learn of the difficulties of navigation, of the camaraderie existing between officers and seamen, of the detailed records kept, of the difficulties of supply but above all of the importance of aircraft. In no case is this more evident than in the action which resulted in the ultimate loss of the Lexington; within sixteen minutes over 103 Japanese aircraft passed over, bombed, torpedoed and machine-gunned the Lex, wounding her so severely that she had to be sunk by one of our destroyers.

This is a tremendously interesting story, another of the kind needed to bring the realities of war home to each of us. It is recommended for the widest possible reading.

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XUM

Bell, Vereen. Two of a Kind. Little Brown, Jan. 5, 1943. 291p.$2.50

Duff Webster was an outlaw because he had shot a turkey on private lands. The pointer dog Judas was an outlaw too because of a mean temper which led him to wanton killing. In the woods where Duff was trying to subsist on whatever animals he could catch he encountered Judas and was almost killed by him. He saw the dog's fine physical qualities, determined to change him into a champion pointer. The account of that struggle between Duff and Judas gives the reader a great deal of information about hunting dogs and the field trials. The book is, as the jacket says, an account of people who live for dogs and by them.

Well, it turns out that Duff is a better judge and trainer of dogs than of women and of the two whom he meets, he marries Delia Phillips, the one more physically attractive, after Lucie Sullivan had released him from a pseudo-engagement with a "chivalrous" lie. Delia turns out to be a nagging, cantankerous wife, despising horses and dogs and field trials. Finally, her hate of dogs brings her to free Judas on the eve of the national championship trials. Duff orders her to leave. Then, he naturally encounters the dog-loving Lucie again at the trials. A double round of chivalry and the story ends with Duff and Lucie together.

For mature adults interested in hunting dogs and their exhibition this story may be of interest. For the average adult we cannot recommend it because of its advocacy of trial marriage. A serial version appeared in Colliers as "Trial by Marriage".

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Freeman, Douglas Southall. Lee's Lieutenants, A Study in Command. Manassas to Malvern Hill. Scribner's, Oct. 19, 1942. 773p. vol.1, $5.00

This is the stuff that Pulitzer prize winners are made of. Lee's Lieutenants is the first of a three volume work in the form of a multiple biography depicting the men who surrounded Lee. Dr. Freeman has brought the training of an historian, the brilliant style of a journalist, and the insight of a judicious yet humorous author to a task which in more pedestrian or academic hands might have resulted in a labored study of military campaigns. No hero worshipper or debunker, he has searched every source for new material on the ability and problems of men such as Beauregard, "Prince John" Magruder, Daniel Hill, Joseph Johnston, Gustavus Smith, "Stonewall" Jackson, James Longstreet, Richard Ewell, Robert Garnett, William Whiting, "Jeb" Stuart, Ambrose Powell Hill, Jubal Early, William Nelson Pendleton, and certain minor figures such as Cocke, Evans, Hampton, Anderson, Hood, Rodes, Garland, Jenkins, Gordon, Fitz Lee, Ashby, Taylor, Trimble, Gregg, Toombs, Pelham, and Pegram.

Dr. Freeman began his work on Lee twenty years ago and discovered that it would not let him go. Having finished his great work on Lee, he discovered that the story of his lieutenants had to be told before he could turn to anything new. It is most fortunate for the reader that Dr. Freeman is a prisoner of his subject. We have here one of the greatest studies in the development of military character yet made. New light has been shed on the change of officers in the first fifteen

months of the war with the reorganization in July 1862 of a competent command. Despite the usual view of the Confederate army's ability to draw upon a supply of many well trained officers, the volume shows that there was a paucity of men with ability to work together and to subordinate their own ambition in the interest of a well knit fighting machine. Beauregard believed that the mantle of Napoleon had fallen upon him. He showed a strong tendency to act independently of others, to quarrel with Secretary of War, Benjamin, and to come into conflict with President Davis who early in the war showed a strong desire to take an active part in the actual planning of strategy. As in the North, there was widespread belief that the war would hardly last beyond the first battle. After the battle of Manassas, the South was certain that it was forever certain of its security. This happy thought might have been somewhat distrubed had southerners known that men such as Johnston had no knowledge of the terrain upon which they were fighting. Magruder quarreled with himself. The troops' election of their officers further slackened discipline and wasted time. Sixty day furloughs demoralized the army. With some exceptions, the first year of war saw little coordination of infantry, cavalry, and artillery, the latter two branches showing relatively little development in the first year of the war.

Obviously, the great need of the army was a leader who could combine knowledge of strategy with genius in administration. When Lee succeeded Johnston in June, the army had such a person. Lee disabused southerners of the "romance" of war. He put white men to work ordinarily reserved for negroes. They built parapets and grumbled at the thought of not being allowed to fight in the open. Not that the dash and vigor was taken out of the campaigns. "Jeb" Stuart scouting reads like the best tradition of wild west tales. In depicting the character of Jackson and Ashby, Freeman hits his stride and does some of the finest characterizations and narrative turned out by a modern historian. More chapters such as those would remove forever any thought of history being a dismal study. Any group can read this work with obvious enjoyment and fruitful results. His studies of Magruder who "was a man who thought all his business so important that he would stop a galloping General, so to say, to compare watches"; of Toombs whose love of show would delight General Goering; of Huger whose slowness Freeman lays to hardening of the arteries; of Hill's backbiting which came from his chronic dyspepsia, all these give a completely human tone to the work. Freeman obviously delights in portraying characters such as Major Dabney, Presbyterian Minister, who accompanied Jackson through a heavy forest garbed in beaver hat, Prince Albert coat, and carrying an umbrella. A major section of the work is a consideration of the reputation of the former professor, "Stonewall" Jackson, who emerges as less of a legendary figure but more as a human being likely to make mistakes but a great man withal. Jackson too was typical of so many of Lee's lieutenants in his sincere belief in God. Religion, patriotism, and the home were driving forces in the work of Lee and Jackson in particular. Dr. Freeman points this out clearly in the work. Although Lee is carefully kept in the background, full credit being accorded his subordinates, the reader cannot help but realize how great was the genius of the man who took these diverse characters and molded them into an efficient staff. The work is an indispensable one for those who want to see the human side of the Confederate army.

James M. Eagan
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XUM

CRIME CLUB-JANUARY SELECTION

Upfield, Arthur W. Murder Down Under. Published for the Crime Club by Doubleday, Doran, January 8, 1943. 298p. $2.00

This is the first publication in America of a leading Australian author of mysteries. In background and characters and language Murder Down Under has a freshness that is only slightly connected with our aroused interest in the land down under. Detective-Inspector Napoleon Bonaparte, "Bony", is a philanthropic type who detects for the love of it and passes the credit to his friend Detective Sergeant John Muir.

When farmer George Loftus mysteriously disappeared following a car accident after a drinking bout John couldn't find a clue. The rain had washed out all footprints; there was no body; there was no suspicion of foul play but rather one thatGeorge had borrowed money and deserted wife and work. Suddenly "Bony", on his vacation, appeared and soon was taking a busman's holiday. Combining the knowledge, wisdom and intuition of a Sherlock Holmes, the personality of a movie actor and radio star and the tracking abilities of an Indian, "Bony" makes friends, acquires scraps of knowledge, uses every sense, such as observation of "keen scented blowflies", and finally traps the murderer. Developing concurrently with the main mystery is that of the frequent disappearances of picturesque Mr. Jelly, whose two daughters supply much of the charm of the story. The solution of both enigmas is excellent. To some it may seem that the style is a bit leisurely; to the reviewer it was a relief from the thrill a chapter type. It is recommended to all readers.

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Gilligan, Edmund. The Gaunt Woman. Charles Scribner's Sons. Jan. 4, 1943 307p. $2.50

The Gaunt Woman is a story of the activities of German U boats in the waters of the North Atlantic as detected and exposed by the crew of the old-time motorless schooner, the Daniel Webster, during a last fishing trip before her Captain, Patrick Bannon, transfers to naval duty. It is a story told with the vivid imagination that marks the seaman's yarn. The action moves dramatically from incident to incident sustained by nothing more convincing than the uncanny intuition of the suspicious Captain and his "dory mate" who are on the lookout for trouble when they set sail from Gloucester armed with stories of the "queer doings" around Red Banks.

Almost at once Captain Bannon suspects that the Danish ship sighted in the course of the Daniel Webster is not Danish; his dory mate, Conrad, rouses his suspicions toward the new Dane among the crew, who speaks Danish like an educated German; then, the floating bodies of dead seamen, obviously, at least to the Captain and his confidant, the victims of mutiny aboard a German ship; and finally a deliberate snare camouflaged as a signal of distress, build up beyond a doubt the case against the Gaunt Woman. Warily boarding the ship, deserted now by all except Captain Skalder, who greets them with a very melodramatic account of his misfortune, Bannon plays his own game of pretense and guides the schooner to Trabo for repair. Safely docked, and the attention of Skalder conveniently diverted, he confirms his suspicions

the Gaunt Woman carries not only the cargo of rum as testified in her papers, but she is a floating arsenal supplying the German U-boats for their insidious attack on merchant ships.

With nothing less than hatred Bannon plots the revenge which will not stop at destruction of the mother ship and the capture of her crew, but will set a time bomb for the doom of all the submarines answering her signals, so that all will perish in the explosion of the hidden ammunition. Assisted by friends on shore, in particular by his sweetheart, Margaret MacLean, and her father, his plans run smoothly with enough dangerous interference supplied by the traitor among his own men to bring the story to an exciting climax and to give further evidence of the keen perception of the Irish Captain, who glories in continuing the fight carried on by his father in the first World War.

The story is interesting. The background is built of scenes familiar to the author and the atmosphere is truly of the sea. The development of the plot, however, is weak. Characters and incidents are too obviously opportune, so that there is not a single surprise in the whole narrative. Throughout the feeling is one of hatred, not of war but of the Germans, and the Captain's excited anticipation of revenge suggests murder rather than defense. The romance like the other elements of the story is secondary and a few suggestive lines are introduced to give the enemy a wrong "steer". The story is not convincing enough to be harmful to the adults who may find it enjoyable. It is not recommended for those of teen age.

The above book is the LITERARY GUILD JANUARY SELECTION

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Bromfield, Louis. Mrs. Parkington. Harper, January 5, 1943. 330p. $2.75

In Mrs. Parkington Louis Bromfield has recorded in novel form the life of a woman who rose from a Western boarding house to a skyscraper apartment on New York's Park Avenue. It is the colorful biography of a class of people, the nouveaux riches, and the history of an era in which rugged individualists were the most rugged.

The story revolves around the life of Mrs. Parkington who, at the age of eighty-four, is still very active and the acknowledged head of the family. As incidents occur in her life in the early 1940's she reminisces over similar indidents in the post Civil War era, particularly during the nineties when her husband, Major Gus Parkington, became a leading financier and one of the nation's builders, via Wall Street.

As a girl orphaned by the loss of her parents in one of the Major's mines, she had married the Major, was educated for society by Gus' former mistress Aspasie, a "monument to complete civilization", was launched into society, suffered a rejection by the elite of the "four hundred" class which was duly revenged by Gus, via Wall Street, and eventurally became a member of the select society group. Gus was a successful money maker; like many modern counterparts in the financial and political field, he was much more successful at making money and running a business than he was at running his family. He gave them plenty of everything but discipline, which he himself lacked. Not to be bound by social conventions such as marriage, he gave his natural

passions free play. It was not illogical that his children should have followed the lead; with one exception the children and grandchildren showed the degenerating effect of too much money, leisure and adherence to false social and economic values.

Through the series of scenes of social life in the late eighteen hundreds and the nineteen hundreds down to the present we read of crooked finance, of revenge, of social jealousies, of debauchery and adultery and divorce. Mrs. Parkington, looking back over her full life, thought that most of the evil was caused by excessive wealth:

> The more she considered all her life and the lives of the family, the more the finger of evidence pointed always toward money. But for Gus's great wealth and ambitions, Alice would never had met the Duke and married him. He would not even have wanted to marry her. But for the money, Alice, would never have had a remittance man for a second husband and an idle feeble man for a third. But for the money Alice might have carried through her idea of becoming a nurse....But for all the money, Herbert would never have met and married the Blair girl or bought the automobile which killed him at the time when automobiles were fantastic luxuries....It was like a monster created by Gus which had destroyed all the things the son of a village grocer had wanted most in life for himself and his descendants....
>
> There was, she thought too, something wrong with American life during the long span of her existence, something wrong with American education, creating a tradition which confused automobiles and water closets with civilization, which corrupted decent standards and set up monstrous values. It was thinking there was something distinguished in being a stockbroker, like automobile manufacturers who believed they were messiahs and had brought about the millennium, like men believing that intelligence and honor, civilization and wisdom could be bought at so much a pound. (pp294-5)

Consistent with that thought is Mrs. Parkington's decision to limit her relatives to a mere $30,000 a year in her will. In contrast with her opinion that money and the actions of men like her husband were responsible for much of the evil is that of her friend, psychiatrist Louis Fletcher,who tells her after the death of her daughter: "And above all, dear Susie, you musn't reproach yourself. The things which destroyed Alice were beyond your control. They were in Alice herself, when she was born, in her very glands, when she was a tiny girl. The doom was already there." And on the next page, "What I have said is honest and it is the truth. There are people in life who are doomed by the very stars." While it is quite a jump from glands to stars, the same element of fatalism exists in both statements.

Because of the way in which the evil results that flow from money have been developed we think that Mrs. Parkington has some value for mature adults. Sytlistically, it is done with Bromfield's usual care. The story goes smoothly; characters are finely drawn.

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